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V I E W

OF THE

*Calvinistic Clubs in the United States.*

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## A View of the Calvinistic Clubs in the United States.

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**A**T a time when the nations of Europe are convulsed, when party rages in the States, and the peace of our country is in danger of being interrupted by war, it becomes the duty of every man, to present such information and sentiments, as may restore tranquillity, and general confidence, among our citizens; and to strive to remove the origin, and causes of our troubles, that in future we may enjoy the equal benefit of religion, liberty and law.

The writer of this short View, of a subject of great importance, is aware that he shall at first excite an alarm: But as his appeal is to the wise, prudent, and patriotic, solely with the design to give felicity to the nation, he trusts that patience and candour will coolly read, what love for our country calls him to publish.

After the adopting of our civil constitution, all good men hoped that law and order were established upon a firm basis, and that all unlaw-

ful, and unnecessary political institutions, would have been voluntarily abolished. They were also inspired with wishes, that no improper associations would be entered into. But these hopes and wishes have been of short duration. Democratic societies were formed, which have been detrimental and offensive. Detecting their unlawful constitutions, design, and tendency, the manly good sense of Americans has removed them. The noxious seeds of discord sown by them, have not, however, been totally rooted out.

But societies, of far more pernicious consequences exist, which pass on unnoticed, while they have chiefly plunged us into a share with the confusions of Europe; which have distressed our commerce, and now threaten us with a war. — These are, the Monthly Meetings of the Calvinistical Clergy. As they have not assumed a name by which they can be properly designated, I will call them the Calvinistic Clubs. These originated about thirty years ago, and were designed to increase the power, and influence of the clergy. They were projected by Doctors Bellamy, Goodrich, Sproat, Williams, and others in New-England. They were organized by delegations from the Presbyteries and Associations of the clergy, through the then colonies, in as extensive a manner, as the times and distances of the respective residences of the founders would permit. Their constitution was formed in Eli-

Elizabeth-Town, in New-Jersey, and a fortnight was devoted to the deliberations and regulations which took place at that time.

The writer of this, when a lad, copied the journal from the original, in the hand, and by permission, of the Rev. Dr. Goodrich, of Durham, in Connecticut, the scribe of that body.

Great secrecy was observed as to the design of this assembling of the clergy. It was however aided by Dr. Goodrich, to be with a view to promote the union of their churches.

After the adjournment of that convention, missionaries and letters were sent into every part of the colonies. The clergy were associated together in clubs, which met monthly, and circulated such information as they thought proper.

At these monthly clubs, the politics of the colonies were discussed, and prayers and orations were delivered in the parishes where they met, routine, which were filled with invectives against those, who had not adopted the Calvinistic creeds and politics.

The people, generally attended the public exercises in the meeting-houses, but had no share in the deliberations of the ministers. Dinners were prepared, by private donations, of the most

delicious food of the season, which could be procured by the parishioners, and a day of conviviality was thus observed once a month by the clergy to their gratification, and the fatigue of the families.

Since the late peace, and the establishment of our new government, these societies have continued. Before the beginning of the present confusions in France, they were chiefly devoted after the late war, to polemic divinity and ecclesiastical controversies. Some dark and obscure question was given out, as the subject of the sermon and discussions, before the next meeting the club. In the interim, the members generally wrote a discourse upon the theme, and preached it before their flocks; often, to the offspring of their best friends, who did not wish to have the Sabbath, and the time for the assembling the people together for *pious purposes*, devoted to doubts and disputation.

From hence, in part, Deism has originated in the States. The clergy exhibited the Christian religion, as being full of mysteries and unintelligible opinions. The thoughtful and sagacious discovered such jarrings in sentiments, that they doubted the propriety of the doctrines of the clergy. Argumentations, contradictions, warmth and disunion succeeded. The older divines who wrote and sold the copy-right of system

were obstinate, the younger were tenacious of  
the sentiments of these fathers. And the simple  
and inexperienced, were thus sacrificed with their  
families, because the people revolted against, and  
missed such teachers.

In this situation, many of the laity, were pre-  
pared to attend to the deistical writings of Ethan-  
ton; and Philosophy and Liberality, were very  
honorable, when the revolution began in France.  
A new employment was found out for the  
Calvinistic Clubs. Long taught, and wishing to  
believe, that the church of Rome was anti-christ,  
the Pope the Beast of the Revelation, and the  
em of Catholics, Babylon which is to be des-  
troyed, previous to the fulfilment of the eternal  
promise, that the Millenium should come, when  
Calvinists were to reign in church and state.  
The clubs, were now most busily engaged to  
bring on that glorious period. Dr. Langdon,  
formerly President of Cambridge College, had  
written a dissertation upon the prophecies, which  
he hurried to the press, lest death should over-  
take him before the purchasers had received the  
benefit of his labors. He predicted that the  
King of France, and the Marquis de la Fayette,  
would be the deliverers of the French nation,  
from civil and spiritual bondage.

The celebrity of the Doctor and his book,  
and employment for the clubs. Dr. Linn and

others were seized with an itch for fame, and enthusiasm for the millenium, and printed their works also.

The sermons, prayers, letters, and conversation of the clergy, at first, very universally favoured the French affairs. Plundering of the catholic churches, their destruction, and the destruction of private property, among the rich in the catholic countries, was too important a matter, for avarice to forget.

This nation, thus warmed by these spirit guides to war and revolutions, attended civic seals. England was alarmed. France was inspired with hopes from our proceedings, that in case of necessity we should unite our forces with theirs, to destroy royalty, nobility, and religion.

Dr. Price not long before his death, exulted that he had lived to see the day, when the flame of liberty was kindled in France. Dr. Priestley also redoubled his activity, in blowing the coals of sedition. These two gentlemen, had encouraged revolutionary societies in England, and the dissenters there, were busy in forming clubs to excite insurrections. They had also corresponded with the Presidents of the New-England colleges, and the Calvinistic clubs, for many years.

Dr. Langdon, being asked at a Calvinist

club in Portsmouth, what was his opinion, as to the French revolution? answered in an exulting manner, "that it was the work of the Lord." This sentiment was extensively diffused.

The Colleges had long before this, been taken into the confederacy of the clubs, and the instructors and pupils, generally disseminated French principles and prejudices, in favour of the measures pursued by that nation.

Every engine was now set in motion, to accelerate an attachment to the French. Gratitude was the pretext. The death of the king and his family,—the measures and outrages of Frenchmen,—were passed by, in these clubs, as necessary, and permitted by God himself for wise purposes. Mr. Barlow's Ode to the Guillotine, and Political Works, were read with ecclat. He had acquired fame among the Calvinistic clubs, from having once been of their body, and having corrected Dr. Watts's book of psalms and hymns, and adapted them to the political situation of Connecticut.

The fluctuating events of the war, the cool reflections of the humane and merciful,—the uncertain issue of French affairs, now began to alter public sentiment. The clergy, cast out of calculation, in their prayers, modestly resign-

ed the fate of France, to the wisdom and discretion of the Almighty, when they found they could not coax him to be upon their side.

To this succeeded an alteration in their sermons, prayers, and deliberations. The pendulum of opinion and exertion, vibrated with slow motion, and at last an almost total change took place. President Willard, of Cambridge College, gave the lead to this. He confessed that he was ashamed of his late doings, and that he had now to make amends to the public, by his doubled zeal to oppose French politics.

While these things were transacting, the Calvinistic clubs and colleges were busy, in their respective neighbourhoods, in scanning the doings and opinions of those who were not of their communities. Such as opposed democratic societies were represented as attached to monarchy, in order to crush their existence in case of public confusions.

As the Colleges are *public property*, and state institutions, notice of their proceedings, in particular, was given to Gov. Samuel Adams, one of the directors of Cambridge college, by virtue of his office, in a manly manner, check the outbreaks of discord among professors of Christianity, in consequence of the mischievous doings

screen of that institution. He was also requested, to the present this notification to President Willard, but this he neglected to do; and President Willard assumed new haughtiness upon the occasion. See the President's being chosen by incorporated bodies, who maintain their own succession, are now not so far under popular controul, as to listen too obediently to public calls for justice. They therefore often take upon themselves the deportment of resentment and superiority.

Information was given to other Colleges, of the odiousness of attempts to scatter political prejudices among the students, against some of our best men in the States, because they were not Calvinists; but without effect. The millenium was doing proaching, when the (money and) liberties of all concern, were to be laid at the feet of the Colleges and semi-Calvinistic clubs. The clergy had determined, in that the millenium must and should come. Thus I presented, in as short a manner as possible, the origin and progress of these most dangerous political clubs.

The power and influence of the clergy is known to be great. To check their ambition, has ever been an arduous and almost impracticable task. Tyranny in all religion is the same. It may sometimes, proceed with more rapid motion, and extend its baneful consequences wider, than doing others.

Directors of the consciences; possessing the keys of knowledge; they have easy access to the hearts and confidence of the people. In New England, the nature of the first emigrations, settlements, and establishments, gave the clergy great sway. They had therefore taken opportunities to establish themselves and their families in wealth, and power, by their zeal in politics and their opposition to the parent state. They had assumed to themselves, the station of peculiar and favourite people of the Lord, and by gravity of motion, and demureness of countenance, had kept the people at a great distance.

Courting the rich men, and directing the politics of the country in every period, they had united a formidable body with them among the laity who received votes and preferments at the will of the clergy. This united phalanx it was dangerous to attack, while they had church censures and discipline, and civil offices at their command to bestow upon their followers, or inflict upon the firm and virtuous, who would not sell their consciences, religion, and country for gold and preferment, or dared to doubt the wisdom, and prudence of the ministers.

These usurpations, customs, and habits, received new strength, and became more formidable, and dangerous, after the clergy were embodied in the Calvinistic clubs.

But, to gain further power and authority to the clergy, Dr. Witherspoon, President of the College of N. Jersey proposed, and the clergy adopted, concerts of prayer, to be held quarterly.—These were to hasten the millenium, and were part of an other order of Calvinistic clubs. Made important, because they were of foreign growth, they were borrowed from Scotland, while the monthly, were of American invention.

The activity, zeal, and importance now exhibited, by so great acquisitions of powerful enemies in war and state affairs, as these clubs were, tended many good men. They spoke without effect against them. Deism spread. The clergy could not check it. It was too useful in case of war and spoil to be parted with. Paine's opinions in revolution and politics, had been considered as almost divine oracles by the clergy.—His tenets were now received as infallible, just, and true, upon all subjects. To be under his standard, and one of his followers, was a popular object. Many borrowed plumes, and made themselves brilliant, from his supposed merit. The varying progress of his affairs have tended indeed to check his consequence, and he will in due time, retire from the stage of action here, and associate with many, who have become great only because they could scribble in promoting others and revolutions. Time can only determine

who have done most injury to christianity, Pain or the Calvinistic clubs.

These ~~clubs~~ have handed about nomination for magistrates, and denounced good men at elections, who were not their adherents, who had been so hardy as to do their duty to their constituents, country, and posterity, in contradiction to the artful plans of the clergy, to secure public property and laws, to serve themselves at the damage of others.

The quick and extensive circulation of the plans of the clergy, from one club to another,—*their controul over the freedom of the press, and attempts to stop the channels of communication,* by which information may reach our fellow-citizens at large, are among the smaller offences, that have originated from their political deliberation and proceedings.

Connecticut is almost totally an ecclesiastical state, ruled by the President of the College, as a Monarch. The caution and politeness of the Governor, the great age of many of the council, the respectful condescension of the members of the lower House, the submission of the clergy, the influence of the clubs, of uncles, brothers, cousins, and poets of former and present pupils, have given him almost unlimited controul. Sufficient to undertake great duties, he will not

nsider the weight of cares too difficult for his  
ars, health or inclination; but will accept the  
gnity of ruling with the united power of an ec-  
lesiastic and politician.

To extend the influence, to increase the num-  
ber and power of these clubs, missions have been  
formed, and missionaries sent into all the frontier  
parts of the States. To propagate religion is the  
text, and the people have not been backward  
in expedite the pious work, with their money  
and prayers. The foundation for this assertion  
is undeniable. With these missions and clubs,  
is also to extend the politics of Price and Priest-

The prophecies of Langdon, and the sys-  
tems of divinity written for wealth, power, and  
vane, by Edwards, Bellamy, Hopkins, and West.

Controverted divinity, French politics, and  
the advancement of a few system mongers, have  
far directed the prayers, sermons, missions,  
liberations and determinations of these clubs.

In no instance have they sought by mutual  
planations and concessions, by good offices, can-  
cers of love, and benevolence, to do away the prejudices  
that divide the christian church. These have  
increased, and jealousies and discontents fo-  
mented, by their usurpations.

Great losses of public property have taken

place to indulge the projects of these clubs. Governments have had much trouble from the plans, to obtain laws, which would give the establishments in property, and superior advantages as to their support.

In some of the New-England states, they have artfully and successfully defeated the lawful petitions of other professors of christianity, for the enjoyment of *their* rights.

Indeed no measure, has taken place, with the revolution of thirty years, in the states, which has been offensive, and caused the interference of legislatures, either to preserve or destroy the religious liberties of other denominations, but what the Calvinistic clubs have taken an active and busy part in.

Fond of power, wanting wealth, proud of their influence and success, they have in all parts of the states, rekindled animosities, that ought never to have taken place.

It has therefore become a general duty to hold and to reflect upon the unconstitutional, dangerous, and destructive nature, tendency and influence of these political societies. Societies who oppose the laws, and religious liberty, except only where they can monopolize all to themselves.

It is an universal obligation upon all to communicate the information presented in this short work. If the Calvinistic clubs proceed unheeded, and uncontroled, this nation will constantly experience, the pernicious effects of discord and division:—Wars at home, tumults abroad; degradation of legislatures, judges and jurors, will be our daily portion.

Whenever folly, fanaticism, self-will, pride, ambition, or avarice, present a probable method, by which the members of these clubs, their sons, nephews, and favorites, may be made rich and great, they will be directed to those objects, in spite of rulers or of law.

To dissolve or abolish those clubs, is not to infringe upon any right of conscience. It is to establish law and peace. They are self-created, unconstitutional, dangerous, detrimental, and anti-christian. They support erroneous opinions—provoke deism, annihilate good-will, endanger the national peace, and prosperity, and degrade the national honor.

Thro' the power and influence of these clubs, the Colleges of Cambridge and New-Haven are continued under the controul of a party, notwithstanding that they were endowed and founded, and have always been supported by the public purse, and donations of men of different religious denominations.

Through them, Dartmouth College is perverted from its original design, as a liberal institution, open for all to become pupils, instructors and governors in it, and betrayed into the hands of Edwardians.

Through them, the glebes of the episcopal church, in Newhampshire, are detained from the lawful proprietors, by private trespassers. Through them, the glebes in Vermont were seized upon by the Legislature, contrary to law, to gratify deists, and to defeat the pious uses they were devoted to, by valid grants and charters.

Through them, two petitions have been delayed for a long time, in the legislature of Connecticut. One, for incorporating the episcopal Academy in Cheshire; another, for the purpose of legally receiving, and taking care of certain bequests and donations, bestowed by individuals for the support of a branch of the christian priesthood in that State.

Thro' them, similar petitions, are passed by on the part of the legislatures of Vermont and N. Hampshire, while men eminent in that State openly justify the violent seizure of the glebes upon the plea of power, if not of right. Thereby the privilege of soliciting by legal trial for restoration of the glebes, is taken from the episcopalians. Through them, the western land

ely held by the State of Connecticut, have been sold to private persons, at a great loss to people of that State.

Through them, the State of Connecticut has been led to resign to the College in N. Haven, eight thousand pounds of public property, while offices of that institution, can be held only by Congregationalists, and all the students are compelled to attend the religious exercises of the college, without any respect to the wishes, opinions, or creeds of either parents or pupils.

Through them, laws have been enacted in New-Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, to give Congregationalists opportunities to tax whole townships for religious purposes; while Congregationalists, thus have obtained an expedient to advance themselves, by tribute of men of other religious persuasions.

Through them, craft and dishonesty, have played upon Christians, by candidates for office, who were deists.

State through them, Ira Allen, Esq. and the Rev. Williams, of Vermont, led the Legislature to seize upon the glebes in that State.

epi land Through them, James Hillhouse, Esq. and the Doct. Dwight obtained the whole of the

sum of eight thousand pounds from the State of Connecticut.

Through them, President Dwight and other officers in Yale-College are defended, while they have subscribed to a Test Act, to qualify them for their offices. Thro' them, religion is perverted from its spiritual benefit to temporal purposes, and degraded to the sinister designs of deists, bigots, and seekers for place.

Thro' them, the acquiescence of others will be given to the laws of our common country, as to religious liberty, our customs as to liberality, candor, charity, moderation, and confidence, in religion, as well as defeated.

Since Colleges have resigned their charters to the Legislatures for correction, parishes and religious societies have given up ancient and useful usages; statesmen have been promoted and encouraged. These resignations, are calls to conscience, but deception and new tyrannies have only been the return they have met with, through the power and influence of the Calvinistic club.

These inventions of haughty, obstinate, persevering men, have too long disturbed the public peace; they have degraded religion to purposes of selfishness, and therefore ought to be abandoned. The cure is at hand; neglect

part of the people, to attend the meetings  
the clubs, or to provide for their feasts.

President Dwight for more than twenty years,  
been a writer in the newspaper upon many  
subjects, where he wished to forward alterations.  
He attacked the constitution of the College,  
while it was directed by Doctor Stiles, and ec-  
clesiastics only. Laymen are now introduced,  
if we must believe without a violation of char-  
acter, that if a President, who was not an Ed-  
wardian, had been elected, that he would have  
evidently sought to place that institution upon the  
same liberal foundation with other Colleges.—  
Shall the ties of religion, consanguinity, and  
friendship be any longer disannulled at Yale?—  
Shall merit be neglected? youth taught prejudi-  
ces? and permitted to circulate them through  
the nation, in order to please the President,  
and to gain diplomas, and flattering recommen-  
dations to schools or pulpits? Ought not the  
Presidents of Colleges to obey as well as teach  
these opinions, which promote the national hap-  
piness?

United as we are by the ties of blood, marriage  
friendship; by customs, manners, and laws,  
shall any of these bonds be dissolved, or their  
ends cast away, by bigotted party men?

unless have been the contentions, and im-

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mense the expences created by the clubs and colleges in support of polemic divinity, and controversies and persecutions concerning mere speculative opinions, in New-England.

Colleges have waged war against each other in support of the favorite tenets they have respectively adopted—Ministers have violated the laws of candor, prudence, and charity, their argumentations and writings against each other. Favorite civilians have been exalted into public offices, as the parties they have espoused have gained the superiority of number who always unite at the elections—Individuals have broke friendship with each other, and the peace of neighbourhoods has been destroyed, the disputes they have engaged in upon mere physical subjects.

In short, but few interruptions of the public tranquility take place, but in consequence of the divinity, which is adopted and taught by ambitious champions. Colleges and parishes change their creeds with the times, as new leaders appear who have gained fame, for their talents in some species of learning or influence, in the wars and politics of the season: Ecclesiastical courts, Legislatures, are often involved in these feuds while love, light, and truth have never been promoted by them.

Thus do error, expence, and trouble multiply, from want of a due regulation of the colleges, and a dissolution of the clubs.

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